



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/883,805	06/18/2001	Kevin F. Browne	MICRO243	2547

27792 7590 05/05/2005

MICROSOFT CORPORATION
LAW OFFICES OF RONALD M. ANDERSON
600 108TH AVENUE N.E., SUITE 507
BELLEVUE, WA 98004

EXAMINER

SMITH, PETER J

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

2176

DATE MAILED: 05/05/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/883,805

Applicant(s)

BROWNE ET AL.

Examiner

Peter J Smith

Art Unit

2176

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 14 February 2005.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-8 and 10-17 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-8 and 10-17 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

1. This action is responsive to communications: amendment filed 2/14/2005.
2. Claims 1-8 and 10-17 are pending in the case. Claims 1, 8, and 10 are independent claims.

Priority

3. Withdrawal of claim to priority for provisional application 60/219,277 is noted by the Examiner.

Specification

4. The amendments to the specification submitted by Applicant to correct typographical errors are accepted by the Examiner.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

5. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

6. **Claims 1-8 and 10-17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Excel 2000 (hereinafter "Excel"), Microsoft, released 1999, screenshots pages 1-16 and additional screenshots pages 1-5.**

Regarding independent claim 1, Excel teaches receiving a user command to generate in pages 2-9. The user can import the data externally as shown in the screenshots, or the user can manually input the data. Excel teaches determining whether pre-existing data is to be imported and determining where the pre-existing data is located into the list in pages 2-9. If the user selects "Get External Data" from the Data menu, then the user is selecting obtain pre-existing data. The user selects then selects the location of the pre-existing data. Excel teaches creating a list in a worksheet in the spreadsheet program in pages 7 and 8. The data can be inputted manually and then selected by the user to indicate the list. Excel teaches performing a second sequence, comprising the step of defining a plurality of fields in the list, each field comprising a plurality of characteristics in pages 3-8. Excel teaches performing a third sequence comprising the step of creating the list in the spreadsheet program, such that each field in each record is logically associated to every other field in the record in pages 7-15. The example sorting demonstrates that the cells in the list are linked horizontally and maintain row integrity throughout the sorts performed on the various columns. Thus, the cells are logically associated with the members cells in the other fields. In the additional Excel screen captures pages 2-5, the help file indicates that lists created in Excel can act as simple databases wherein the row is a record and each column is a specific field. These definitions are explicitly shown in page 4 of the additional Excel screen captures. The original Excel screen captures pages 8-15 demonstrate that when the list is identified, Excel maintains a continuing association between each field within each record such that each field remains associated with other fields within each record when the record is manipulated.

What Excel does not teach is making the list a List Object, thus creating a continuing association among fields of a record regardless of whether a user selects all of the fields within each record when manipulating records within the list. Excel does teach the creation and embedding of objects into a spreadsheet in page 16. In making the list an object, the list would have been permanently identified, thus creating a continuing association among fields of a record regardless of whether a user selects all of the fields within each record when manipulating records within the list. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have combined the list creation properties of Excel with the object creation and embedding properties of Excel to have created the claimed invention. It would have been obvious and desirable to have created the list in the form of an object so that the list would have been easier to identify, manipulate and move about the spreadsheet.

Regarding dependent claim 2, Excel teaches determining whether the pre-existing data is located in a spreadsheet program worksheet, and using a user input range within the worksheet to identify the pre-existing data in page 8. Excel teaches opening a Query dialog box operable for receiving user commands to navigate to a location that contains the pre-existing data in page 2.

Regarding dependent claim 3, Excel teaches determining the location where to place the list in page 6.

Regarding dependent claim 4, Excel teaches wherein the location to place the list is selected from the list consisting essentially of a new worksheet, or an existing worksheet in page 6.

Regarding dependent claim 5, Excel teaches wherein the step of defining the fields in the list comprises, adding a new field, modifying a field, deleting a field, or altering at least one of the characteristics of a field in pages 3-5.

Regarding dependent claim 6, Excel does not teach making the list a List Object. Excel does teach the creation and embedding of objects into a spreadsheet in page 16. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have combined the list creation properties of Excel with the object creation and embedding properties of Excel to have created the claimed invention. It would have been obvious to have created the list in the form of an object so that the list would have been easier to manipulate and move about the spreadsheet.

Regarding dependent claim 7, What Excel does not teach making the list a List Sheet. Excel does teach the creation and embedding of objects into a spreadsheet or into a separate page sheet in page 16. The object can be moved anywhere within the sheet to which it is embedded. An object forming a separate sheet is beneficial so that it does not cover any cells of a spreadsheet page. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have combined the list creation properties of Excel with the object creation and embedding properties of Excel to have created the claimed invention. It would have been obvious to have created the list in the form of an object List Sheet so that the list would have been easier to manipulate and not have covered any cells of the data sheet.

Regarding independent claim 8, Excel teaches displaying a dialog box operable for receiving user commands in pages 3-5. Excel teaches specifying the location within the spreadsheet wherein the list will be positioned in page 6. Excel teaches specifying the location

Art Unit: 2176

of any pre-existing data that will populate the database in page 6. Excel teaches displaying a dialog box operable for receiving user commands to define a plurality of options associated with each of the fields in the list in pages 3-5. Excel teaches displaying a dialog box operable for receiving user commands to save the plurality of options associated with each field in page 5. Excel teaches creating the list in a worksheet within the spreadsheet program, such that each field in each record is logically associated to every other field in the record in pages 7-15. The example sorting demonstrates that the cells in the list are linked horizontally and maintain row integrity throughout the sorts performed on the various columns. Thus, the cells are logically associated with the members cells in the other fields. In the additional Excel screen captures pages 2-5, the help file indicates that lists created in Excel can act as simple databases wherein the row is a record and each column is a specific field. These definitions are explicitly shown in page 4 of the additional Excel screen captures. The original Excel screen captures pages 8-15 demonstrate that when the list is identified, Excel maintains a continuing association between each field within each record such that each field remains associated with other fields within each record when the record is manipulated.

What Excel does not teach is making the list a List Object, thus creating a continuing association among fields of a record regardless of whether a user selects all of the fields within each record when manipulating records within the list. Excel does teach the creation and embedding of objects into a spreadsheet in page 16. In making the list an object, the list would have been permanently identified, thus creating a continuing association among fields of a record regardless of whether a user selects all of the fields within each record when manipulating records within the list. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time

the invention was made to have combined the list creation properties of Excel with the object creation and embedding properties of Excel to have created the claimed invention. It would have been obvious and desirable to have created the list in the form of an object so that the list would have been easier to identify, manipulate and move about the spreadsheet.

Regarding independent claim 10, Excel teaches a first plurality of input elements operable for receiving user commands to determine the location of data to input into the list in page 2. Excel teaches a second plurality of input elements operable for receiving user command to determine the location where the list will be placed in the spreadsheet in page 6. Excel teaches a window for defining the fields in the list and a drop down menu operable for selecting a data type associated with each field defined in the window in pages 3-5. Excel teaches an "OK" button which is equivalent to a "FINISH" button for creating the list, such that each field in each record is logically associated to every other field in the record in pages 6-15. The example sorting demonstrates that the cells in the list are linked horizontally and maintain row integrity throughout the sorts performed on the various columns. Thus, the cells are logically associated with the members cells in the other fields. In the additional Excel screen captures pages 2-5, the help file indicates that lists created in Excel can act as simple databases wherein the row is a record and each column is a specific field. These definitions are explicitly shown in page 4 of the additional Excel screen captures. The original Excel screen captures pages 8-15 demonstrate that when the list is identified, Excel maintains a continuing association between each field within each record such that each field remains associated with other fields within each record when the record is manipulated.

What Excel does not teach is making the list a List Object, thus creating a continuing association among fields of a record regardless of whether a user selects all of the fields within each record when manipulating records within the list or a field form box for receiving a field name for each field defined in the window. Excel does teach the creation and embedding of objects into a spreadsheet in page 16. In making the list an object, the list would have been permanently identified, thus creating a continuing association among fields of a record regardless of whether a user selects all of the fields within each record when manipulating records within the list. A user label the different fields in Excel by populating a header cell at the top of each field with a name for the field. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have combined the list creation properties of Excel with the object creation and embedding properties of Excel and the field naming ability of Excel to have created the claimed invention. It would have been obvious and desirable to have named the fields so that the user would have known what the cell would have represented in each field. It would have been obvious and desirable to have created the list in the form of an object so that the list would have been easier to manipulate and move about the spreadsheet.

Regarding dependent claim 11, Excel teaches a first reference window for receiving user input to identify the location of data to import into the list external to the spreadsheet in pages 2-5. Excel teaches a second reference window for receiving user input to identify the location in the spreadsheet of the list in page 6.

What Excel does not teach is making the list a List Object. Excel does teach the creation and embedding of objects into a spreadsheet in page 16. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have combined the list creation

Art Unit: 2176

properties of Excel with the object creation and embedding properties of Excel to have created the claimed invention. It would have been obvious and desirable to have created the list in the form of an object so that the list would have been easier to manipulate and move about the spreadsheet.

Regarding dependent claim 12, Excel teaches a plurality of buttons operable for defining the fields in the list in pages 4-5. What Excel does not teach is making the list a List Object. Excel does teach the creation and embedding of objects into a spreadsheet in page 16. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have combined the list creation properties of Excel with the object creation and embedding properties of Excel to have created the claimed invention. It would have been obvious and desirable to have created the list in the form of an object so that the list would have been easier to manipulate and move about the spreadsheet.

Regarding dependent claim 13, Excel does not specifically teach a plurality of buttons comprised from the group consisting essentially of an "Add" button, a "Modify" button, a "Delete" button, and a "Setting" button. The plurality of buttons consisting essentially of an "Add" button, a "Modify" button, a "Delete" button, and a "Setting" button are needed to generate and maintain the fields of a list. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have modified Excel to have used a plurality of buttons comprised from the group consisting essentially of an "Add" button, a "Modify" button, a "Delete" button, and a "Setting" button to have assisted the user in creating the list in the spreadsheet.

Regarding dependent claim 14, Excel teaches a frame operable for defining the border of the list in page 8. Excel teaches in page 7-8 that a row selector may indicate a particular row of the list. Excel teaches in pages 7-8 a set of blank cells which may be used as a plurality of field headers operable for identifying the data fields in the plurality of records. Excel teaches a cell table operable for storing individual data fields in pages 7-8.

Regarding dependent claim 15, Excel teaches embedding an object into a spreadsheet in page 16. Objects in Excel become active when a constituent part of the object is active. Since Excel does not specifically teach the list object, Excel does not teach wherein the frame is active when an active cell is within the List Object. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have combined the list creation properties of Excel with the object creation and embedding properties of Excel to have created the claimed invention. It would have been obvious and desirable to have created the list in the form of an object so that the list would have been easier to manipulate and move about the spreadsheet. The List Object would be active when a cell within the object is activated by the user.

Regarding dependent claim 16, Excel does not specifically teach wherein the field headers are ghosted out over the top of a spreadsheet column header when the field headers are scrolled off the spreadsheet. Excel does teach split panes so that field headers may be viewed even when scrolled off the spreadsheet. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have modified the list of Excel to have ghosted out the field headers over the top of a spreadsheet when the field headers are scrolled off the spreadsheet so that the user could maintain an identification of the data type in each column.

Regarding dependent claim 17, Excel teaches wherein the embedded database further comprises an unused space around the cell table, expands as new records are inserted into the cell table, the unused space being operable for facilitating the insertion of new records and fields by maintaining a region between the frame and the cell table in pages 7-8.

Response to Arguments

7. Applicant's arguments filed 2/14/2005 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Regarding Applicant's argument on pages 8 and 9 that the prior art teaches that the user has to select all of the records each time before sorting, the Examiner respectfully disagrees. The Excel 2000 version (hereinafter "Excel"), cited by the Examiner, requires that the user only identifies the list the first time before performing one or more record manipulations. Multiple sorts may be performed by the user thereafter as long as the list remains identified. Thus, the continued association among the fields in each record is maintained as long as the list remains identified. The Examiner has provided additional screen captures of the Excel which show that the Excel explicitly identifies the list and that the list explicitly may be a simple database. An example of how the list is a simple database is shown on page 4. Page 5 of the additional screen captures demonstrates that Excel provided an assisting data form for adding, changing, finding and deleting records of a list, thus further showing that Excel identifies that list as an entity. Thus, the Examiner contends that, as long as Excel identified the list, a continuing association was created among the fields of each record.

Regarding Applicant's second argument on pages 9 and 10 that the cited reference does not teach why it would have been obvious to one ordinary skill at the time of the invention to

Art Unit: 2176

have made the list an object, the Examiner respectfully disagrees. As mentioned in the Examiner's response to Applicant's first Argument, Excel recognizes the a list as an actual entity existing within the spread sheet. This is shown by the continuing association shown in pages 8-15 of the first set of screen captures and by the list descriptions and definitions, and list manipulation tools taught in pages 2-5 of the second set of screen captures. Page 16 of the first set of screen captures shows that Excel can insert object entities into a spreadsheet. The object could be a chart, picture, floating text, or any Object Linking and Embedding (OLE) object. Thus, it is known in the prior art Excel the techniques and advantages of using objects in spreadsheets. Since a list is already identified as an independent entity in the prior art Excel, the Examiner believes it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to have made the list entity into a object entity that would have been embedded into the spreadsheet as an inserted object. The object entity would have been edited user the data forms taught in page 5 of the second set of screen captures and being an object the list would have been permanently identified and thus a permanent association would have been maintained among the fields of each record.

Conclusion

8. **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.** Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period

Art Unit: 2176

will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

9. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Peter J Smith whose telephone number is 571-272-4101. The examiner can normally be reached on Mondays-Fridays 7:00am-3:30pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Joseph H Feild can be reached on 571-272-4090. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

PJS
4/28/2005


JOSEPH FEILD
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER